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ABSTRACT

Human resource consultancy as a profession is misunderstood and often justly criticized. There are some standards for excellence in consultancy, and the process of human resource consultancy is at the very heart of training and development. A panel of four employers of consultants shared their views at the 1988 Dallas National Conference of the American Society for Training and Development's Human Resources Development Consultancy Network. The panel discussed 45 issues and dilemmas in client-consultant relationships, covering a variety of consulting roles. Among the recurring themes advanced by panel members were the following: (1) plan for your consultancy relationship; (2) market your services or products specifically; (3) be the expert; and (4) do what you say you'll do. The panelists also dealt with the process of determining the needs of people, groups, and organizations, and meeting them with specific interventions, along with pricing. (The mission statement of the Human Resources Development Network is included in this document.) (KC)

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CONSULTANCY:
KEY STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

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CONSULTANCY: KEY STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

Human Resource Development Consultancy as a profession is misunderstood and often justly criticized. There are some standards for excellence in consultancy, and the process of human resource consultancy is at the very heart of training and development. This article summarizes the feelings and opinions of four experienced professionals who buy consulting services.

Human Resource Development Consultancy as a profession is misunderstood and often justly criticized. There are some standards for excellence in consultancy, and the process of human resource consultancy is at the very heart of training and development. The value of third party roles in the conduct of business has practical impact on planning, designing, and implementing changes in human and organizational effectiveness. Individuals move in and out such roles at different times in their careers, and they may conduct their consultancy efforts internally within one organization or externally with many.

ASTD's Human Resources Development Consultancy Network is dedicated to enhancing the knowledge, attitudes, and skills of consultants and to improving the effectiveness of consultancy. Its mission is to serve as the focal point for the interests of members and potential members related to developing the theory and practice of consultation. The Network focuses programming products and services to all who conduct consultation on a full-or part-time basis, in all professional practice areas, industries, and types of organizations.

As part of the network's programming at the 1988 Dallas National Conference, a panel featuring users of consulting services commented freely in a program entitled: "Internal and External Consulting: A Consumer's View on Price, Quality, and Expectations." The panelists included Dick Hawkins of Honeywell, John Hurley of Chase Manhattan, Dick Kropp of Wang Laboratories, and Mike Randels of Aviall, A Ryder System Company. Moderated by Dave Jamieson of the Jamieson Consulting Group, the panel looked at excellence, competence and how they select, work, and prefer to work with consultants.

The panel discussed 45 issues and dilemmas in client-consultant relationships and covered a variety of consulting roles. "Know your customer" is something the panelist recommended frequently to aspiring consultants. The highlights from that session included several other recurring themes which can be looked at as good advice "from the horses mouth" for any consultant:

1) Plan for your consultancy relationship. Know the organizational context, know why you are seeing the client, sell specifics and differentiate your specialty or benefits. Each person had distinct marketing preferences (phone call, letter, references needed, etc.) and it proved that consultants should do some homework before contact.

2) Market your services or products specifically. They suggested consultants should give recommendations and choices, but don't oversell. Be competitive because they expect high quality at a reasonable cost. Perform to requirements and exceed expectations, and be ready to propose what kind of validation we can use to measure your impact.

3) Be the expert. Bring a broad base and new ideas with you, and be ready to tell it 'like it is'. Be available to me as your client, and clarify how you'll report to me with clarity.."in plain vanilla". Build trust as the project develops and let me know if there are any slip ups.

4) Do what you say you'll do. Don't be afraid to "turn loose" as long as you keep your role in focus. Deliver the 'packages' and write well. Your reputation will be on he line, and if I like your work, I'll probably recommend you to friends in the field. So don't shop around on our relationship. Make a 100% commitment to guarantee your work.

The panelists also dealt with the process of determining the needs of people, groups, and organizations, and meeting them with specific interventions. They discussed pricing ranges for specific services, as well as personal preferences in how to market these services successfully. While there are some basic professional standards, price was negotiable in most cases and depended on benefits produced. In a real world view of what makes a difference, they shared experiences as consumers in a 90-minute session that everyone practicing consultancy will find valuable. (It is available in the ASTD Cassette Library (88ASTD-T72g).

Mission Document

of the

HRD CONSULTANCY NETWORK

We are dedicated to enhancing the knowledge, attitudes, and skills of consultants and improving the effectiveness of consultancy.

Our mission is to serve as the focal point for the interests of our members and potential members in their special interests related to improving the theory and practice of consultation.

The HRD Consultancy Network (formerly the HRD Consulting Network) recognizes the value of third-party roles in the conduct of business and their particular value in planning, designing, and implementing changes in human and organizational effectiveness. We further recognize that individuals may move in and out of such roles at different times in their careers and that they may conduct their consultancy efforts internally within one organization or externally within many organizations.

Our membership is, therefore, composed of many types of consultants, from entering, less experienced to established, more experienced consultants operating both internally and externally in all kinds of organizations.

Therefore, we will focus our programming products and services to all who conduct consultation on a full- or part-time basis, in all professional practice areas, industries, and types of organizations.

Our emphasis will be in such areas as:

- o competencies for consultation;
- o entering the consulting role and/or business;
- o excellence in conduct of consulting phases;
- o issues and dilemmas in client/consultant relationships;
- o marketing consulting services and products;
- o planning for consultancy;
- o running the "business" of consulting; and
- o varieties of consulting roles.